

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1-38. (canceled).

39. (currently amended): A ~~flexible~~-connection unit for use in a ~~spinal~~ bone fixation device, comprising:

a first end portion and a second end portion;

~~at least one metal~~ a spacer interposed between ~~[[two]]~~ the first and second end portions;

and

~~a flexible metal material~~ longitudinal member located in a longitudinal axial channel of the ~~at least one metal~~ spacer, wherein the first and second end portions substantially prevent motion of the spacer in the longitudinal direction, and the connection unit is configured to be coupled to a bone structure of a patient by at least two securing member ~~to provide flexibility to the flexible connection unit.~~

40. (currently amended): The ~~flexible~~-connection unit of claim 39 wherein said ~~at least one metal~~ spacer further comprises a male interlocking member and a female interlocking cavity each configured to structurally interlock with ~~respective adjacent metal spacers or end portions having a corresponding female interlocking cavity and male interlocking member, respectively,~~ of an adjacent spacer and an adjacent end portion located on opposite sides of the spacer, or two adjacent spacers located on opposite sides of the spacer, or two adjacent end portions located on opposite sides of the spacer.

41. (currently amended): The ~~flexible~~-connection unit of claim 39 wherein said ~~flexible metal material~~ longitudinal member comprises a metal wire comprising a plurality of metal yarns.

42. (currently amended): The ~~flexible~~-connection unit of claim 39 wherein said ~~flexible metal material~~ longitudinal member comprises a braided metal wire structure comprising a plurality of interwoven metal wires.

43. (canceled).

44. (new): The connection unit of claim 39 wherein said spacer comprises a biocompatible metal spacer.

45. (new): The connection unit of claim 39 wherein said spacer comprises a metal-synthetic hybrid spacer.

46. (new): A connection unit, comprising:

- a first element configured to be coupled to a first securing member, the first securing member being configured to engage a bone structure of a patient;

- a second element configured to be coupled to a second securing member, the second securing member being configured to engage a bone structure at a different location from the first securing member;

- a center element located between the first and second elements and having an axial channel therein, wherein the first and second elements substantially prevent motion of the center element in a longitudinal direction; and

- a connecting element configured to pass through the axial channel of the center element and configured to be secured to at least one of the first and second elements.

47. (new): The connection unit of claim 46 wherein the connecting element comprises a wire.

48. (new): The connection unit of claim 46 wherein the connecting element comprises a braided wire.

49. (new): The connection unit of claim 46 wherein said center element comprises a biocompatible metal spacer.

50. (new): The connection unit of claim 46 wherein said center element comprises a metal-synthetic hybrid spacer.

51. (new): The connection unit of claim 46 wherein said center element comprises a synthetic spacer.

52. (new): A connection unit, comprising:

a first element configured to be coupled to a first securing member, the first securing member being configured to engage a bone structure of a patient;

a second element configured to be coupled to a second securing member, the second securing member being configured to engage a bone structure at a different location from the first securing member and having an axial channel therein;

a third element located such that the second element is between the first and third elements, wherein the first and third elements substantially prevent motion of the second element in a longitudinal direction; and

a connecting element configured to pass through the axial channel of the center element and configured to be secured to at least one of the first and third elements.

53. (new): The connection unit of claim 52 wherein the connecting element comprises a wire.

54. (new): The connection unit of claim 52 wherein the connecting element comprises a braided wire.

55. (new): The connection unit of claim 52 wherein said center element comprises a biocompatible metal spacer.

56. (new): The connection unit of claim 52 wherein said center element comprises a metal-synthetic hybrid spacer.

57. (new): The connection unit of claim 52 wherein said center element comprises a synthetic spacer.